

THE  
UNITED STATES  
OF  
AMERICA  
HAS BECOME  
THE

COPY

*Reichstag*

A  
PEER REVIEWED  
NONSITE EDITORIAL  
BY

Adolph Reed, Jr.  
*Professor Emeritus*  
Political Science Department  
University of Pennsylvania



# Kansas Socialist History



## About the Cover

Our 21st Century booklet is in tribute to the far-reaching legacy of the Kansas "Little Blue Books" and the "Appeal to Reason" publishers of Girard

Thank you!

## Kansas Public Radio

Posted April 26th, 2019,  
by Tom Averill

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the publication of the "Little Blue Books." The inexpensive booklets, printed in the southeast Kansas town of Girard, covered a wide-range of topics. Hundreds of millions of these booklets were sold. As the Commentator tells us, the Little Blue Books helped put information into the hands of everyday Americans at an affordable price.

Listen to the original  
Kansas Public Radio  
broadcast  
**ON YOUR PHONE!**



## (Transcript)

William Jennings Bryan  
Oleander  
on the 100th  
Anniversary of the Little  
Blue Books

Well folks,  
Iola Hum-  
boldt and I  
were spring  
cleaning in the attic when  
she came across a shoebox

*Continued inside back cover*



# DAS ~~Andere~~ DEUTSCHLAND

FÜR ENTSCHEIDENE REPUBLIKANISCHE POLITIK / KEINER PARTEI DIENSTBAR

Berlin, Sonnabend, den 11. März 1933

Berlin, den 3. März 1933.

Der Polizeipräsident  
Landeskriminalpolizeiamt (H)  
N. 107-181. 32.

## VERBOT.

Auf Grund des § 1 der Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutze von Volk und Staat vom 28. 2. 1933 (RGBl. I S. 83) verbiete ich hiermit im Interesse der öffentlichen Sicherheit und Ordnung das Erscheinen der Wochenzeitung

„Das Andere Deutschland“

auf die Dauer von 3 Monaten.

Zu widerhandlungen werden nach § 4 der Verordnung bestraft.

I. V.  
gez.: Diels.

Für richtige Abschrift:  
gez. Domnitzsch  
Kanzleiangehörige.

An den Verlag  
„Das Andere Deutschland“  
Berlin W 51

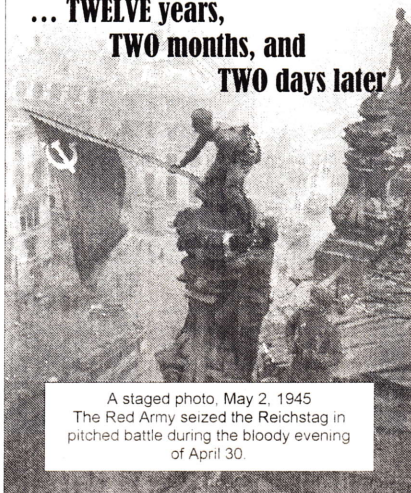
### FIVE DAYS AFTER THE REICHSTAG FIRE

### THE FIRST CENSORED ANTI-FASCIST NEWSPAPER IN NAZIS GERMANY

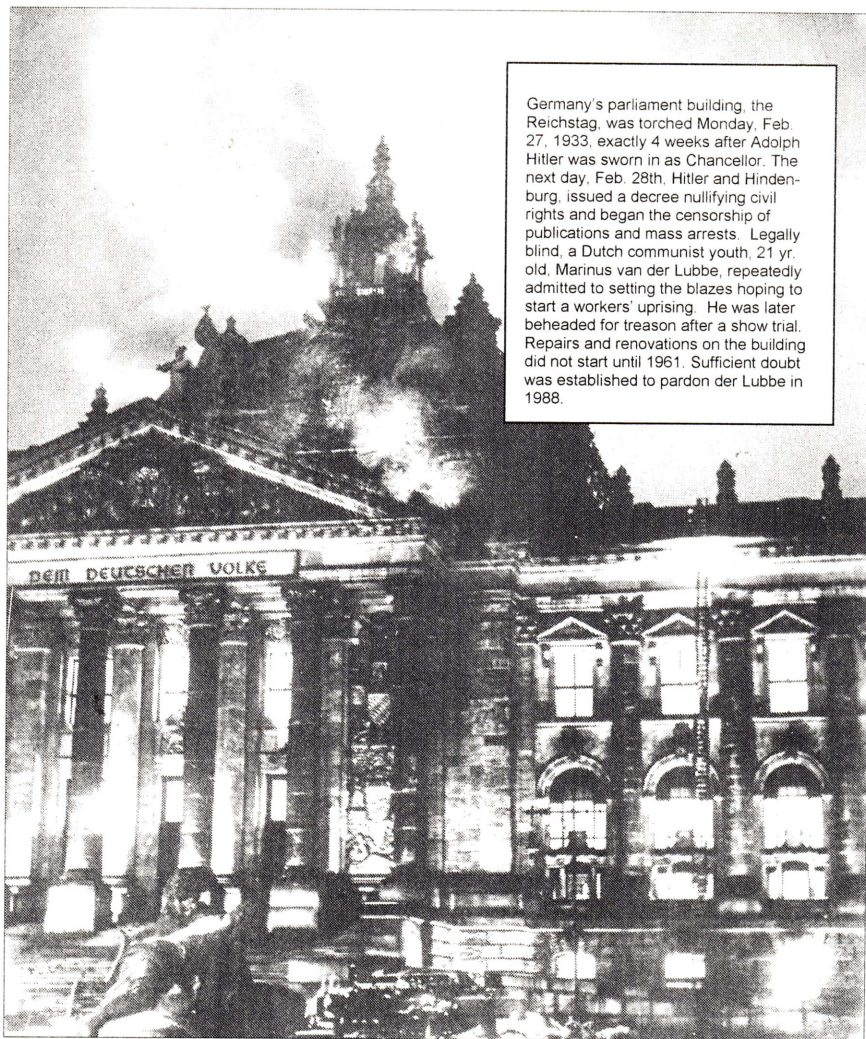
SINGLE SHEET — LEGAL DECREE

Publication Title  
“THE OTHER GERMANY”  
FOR DECIDED REPUBLICAN POLITICS  
SERVING NO PARTY

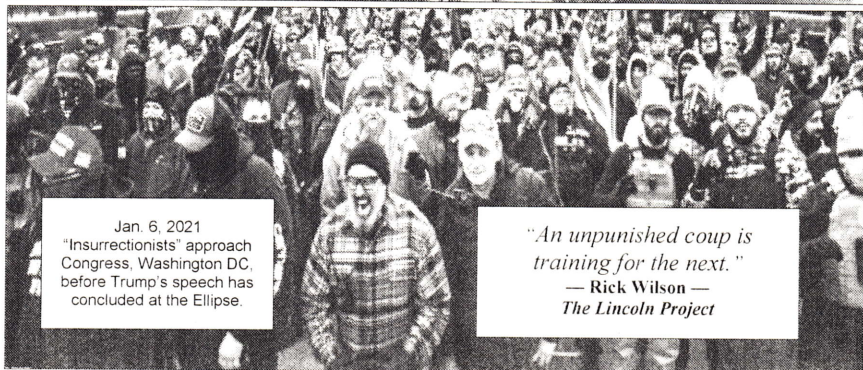
... TWELVE years,  
TWO months, and  
TWO days later



A staged photo, May 2, 1945  
The Red Army seized the Reichstag in  
pitched battle during the bloody evening  
of April 30.



Germany's parliament building, the Reichstag, was torched Monday, Feb. 27, 1933, exactly 4 weeks after Adolph Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor. The next day, Feb. 28th, Hitler and Hindenburg, issued a decree nullifying civil rights and began the censorship of publications and mass arrests. Legally blind, a Dutch communist youth, 21 yr. old, Marinus van der Lubbe, repeatedly admitted to setting the blazes hoping to start a workers' uprising. He was later beheaded for treason after a show trial. Repairs and renovations on the building did not start until 1961. Sufficient doubt was established to pardon der Lubbe in 1988.



Jan. 6, 2021  
"Insurrectionists" approach Congress, Washington DC, before Trump's speech has concluded at the Ellipse.

*"An unpunished coup is training for the next."*  
— Rick Wilson —  
*The Lincoln Project*



# THE WHOLE COUNTRY

IS THE

# Reichstag

A Peer Reviewed Editorial from Nonsite.org

**BY ADOLPH REED, JR.**

Posted AUGUST 23, 2021

Jean: I just can't get over it.

Bérenger: Yes, I can see you can't. Well, it was a rhinoceros—all right, so it was a rhinoceros! It's miles away by now... miles away...

Jean: But you must see it's fantastic! A rhinoceros loose in the town, and you don't bat an eyelid! It shouldn't be allowed!

[Bérenger yawns.]

Put your hand in front of your mouth!

Bérenger: Yais... yais... It shouldn't be allowed. It's dangerous. I hadn't realized. But don't worry about it, it won't get us here.

— Eugène Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* —

**I**t's time to be blunt.[1] The right-wing political alliance anchored by the Republican party and Trumpism coheres around a single concrete objective—taking absolute power in the U.S. as soon and as definitively as possible. And they're more than ready, even seemingly want, to destroy the social fabric of the country to do so.

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They smell blood in the water. They have a strong majority on the Supreme Court and a majority in the federal judiciary overall. Republicans imagine that with the aid of the aggressive campaign of disfranchisement they're pursuing in forty-three states, they'll take control of one or both houses of Congress next year. Mitch McConnell devised the playbook against the Obama presidency; with a Democrat in the White House, the GOP's sole legislative agenda is obstruction, to make certain that no legislation passes, that no appointments are confirmed, to the extent of often enough forcing government shutdowns. Corporate media, punditry, and academics have obscured this Republican strategy with names implying a tit-for-tat perspective, like "partisan gridlock,"[2] which, they lament, is causing Americans to lose patience with and trust in government.

**D**iscrediting government and the idea of the public has been a component of the GOP game plan since Reagan, and Democrats have reinforced that message in their own way. Jimmy Carter ran for the party's presidential nomination in 1976 partly on his record of having cut the size of Georgia's government as governor, and as president, he initiated deregulation as a policy priority and imposed the economic shock that paved the way for Reagan. And it was

Bill Clinton who announced in his 1996 State of the Union Address, "The era of big government is over," and he followed through by terminating the federal government's sixty-year commitments to provide direct income support and housing for the indigent. Reagan attacked the social safety net as a wasteful giveaway for frauds and losers. Clinton, as avatar of the Democrats' "me too, but not so much" response to Reaganism, insisted that publicly provided social benefits should go only to those who "play by the rules." Four decades of retrenchment and privatization of the public sector—often under the guise of "outsourcing" for greater efficiency or "doing more with less," which Clinton and Gore sanitized as "reinventing" government to make it "leaner" and "smarter"—combined with steadily increasing economic inequality and government's failure to address it in any meaningful way to fuel lack of confidence, distrust, and hostility toward government and public goods, and eventually even the idea of the public itself. And the reactionary capitalist interests that bankroll the ultraright have taken advantage of that unaddressed economic insecurity and stoked frustration and rage into a dangerously authoritarian political force.

**I**t wasn't such a big step from Rick Santelli's faux populist 2009 meltdown calling, from the floor of the Chicago

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Board of Trade, of all places, for a Tea Party rising to the January 6, 2021 Capitol insurrection. McConnell's openly declared strategy of stalemating Democratic initiatives of whatever sort made clear that the Republicans have no commitment to democratic government; every move they made was directed, consciously or not, toward takeover via putsch or putsch dressed up as election. The outcome of the 2000 presidential election was an early augury, as the George W. Bush campaign strongarmed a victory by means of actively partisan intervention by Katherine Harris, the Florida Secretary of State, mobilization of corporate goons to storm the Miami-Dade recount, and turning to a reactionary bloc of Supreme Court Justices to place a fig leaf of legitimacy onto theft of the election. The Gore campaign's reluctance to fight back aggressively was also an augury of the implications of Clintonism's victory within the party, as Gore, Kerry, and Obama all ran, and Obama governed, in pursuit of a bipartisan coalition anchored nominatively by nonexistent "moderate" Republicans. Hillary Clinton tried that approach as well and thus did her part to put Trump in the White House.

**"... There is no such thing as 'right-wing populism;' it is an invention of bourgeois propagandists in the punditry and academy. ..."**

**T**his history is another reason for continued skepticism about Biden's agenda, even though he has so far been much better than might have been anticipated from the standpoint of addressing working-class and popular concerns. We'll see how far he goes and how long the inclination lasts, but at least he has been making noises about using government to pursue the public good. Already, however, despite ordering troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, he's embarked on a foreign policy of interventionist imperialism in Latin America and has increased bellicosity and adventurist saber-rattling toward China. And it's not clear whether even his much touted infrastructure proposal will result in an expanded sphere of public goods or will only fatten up public infrastructure for the private sector to butcher. We can only hope that Biden and the

Wall Street Keynesians who speak into his left ear realize how grave the political situation is and don't succumb to the temptation to try to defeat the reactionary threat

with soaring rhetoric and smoke and mirrors. I fear that won't be adequate.

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The threat is serious. Some of the reactionary, authoritarian tendencies that condensed around Trump and Trumpism have been festering and growing in American politics at least since the end of World War II. First Barry Goldwater, then Ronald Reagan brought them out of the shadowy underworld populated by such groups as the John Birch Society, the World Anti-Communist League, various McCarthyite tendencies, Klansmen and other white supremacists, America Firsters, ultra-reactionary groups with ties to shadowy international entities like Operation Condor that has specialized in state-centered terror and death squads in Latin America and its equivalent in other regions, Christian Nationalists, anti-Semites and Islamophobes. During the Reagan presidency the treasonous Iran-Contra operation[3] illustrated these reactionaries' contempt for democratic government. The guide-dog corporate news media sanitized it as a "scandal," and dutifully shepherded public discussion of it away from the magnitude of the crimes against constitutional government and toward the puerile, soap operatic question "What did he [Reagan, etc.] know and when did he know it?" They've been joined in the Trump years by a cornucopia of more or less organized thugs, militant racists and misogynists, open fascists, reactionary libertarians, delusional conspiracists, damaged true believers, and utterly venal grifters—a

category that cuts across all the others—and they're bankrolled by the American equivalent of German Junkers.

This is one reason that fantasies of red-brown or left/right populist alliance are wrong-headed and disturbing. There is no such thing as "right-wing populism;" it is an invention of bourgeois propagandists in the punditry and academy. Its principal intent is, on the domestic front, to discredit the left by association with a putatively dangerous irrationalism, e.g., by equating Sanders and Trump. [4] Deep-pocketed reactionaries who play the long game find the construct useful for creating confusion and dissensus among the nominal left, and some nominal leftists can find the fiction financially appealing or, at a minimum, as yet another in the lengthy skein of gimmicks and quick fixes that will deliver us from the need to organize.[5]

While parsing their various flavors of reaction can be an interesting and useful undertaking, that's not my objective here. Nor am I principally concerned with whether some, all, or most of them qualify as fascists or even a fascist front. The point is that, however taxonomized, they constitute an extremely dangerous and organized political force in the U.S. And it is not far-fetched to worry that

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2022 or 2024 could mark the end of the proceduralist democracy to which we've been accustomed. They've been laying the groundwork. In addition to their concerted efforts to restrict voting, Republican-controlled state legislatures have been plotting strategies for attempting to nullify federal laws, passing bills intended to prohibit municipalities from enforcing them. Those legislatures also have been working overtime to eliminate civil liberties, whistleblowing, whatever shards remain of reproductive freedom, and have been legislating a reactionary "culture wars" agenda on a scale not seen since the darkest period of anticommunist hysteria and southern Massive Resistance in the wake of the Brown decision.

**D**es, these moves are all elements in a hustle—a loud, massive effort to change the subject by means of scapegoating from attempts to address the sources and effects of horribly intensifying inequality and spreading economic insecurity, as well as from the catastrophe of Trump's presidency. But they are also steps in preparation for seizure of power. Comparison with the shenanigans of Massive Resistance can am-

plify that point. In *An American Insurrection: James Meredith and the Battle of Oxford, Mississippi, 1962* (Anchor, 2003), William Doyle shows how segregationist governor Ross Barnett attempted to interdict the federal government's order that James Meredith be permitted to enroll as the first student officially recognized as black at the University of Mississippi. Barnett was a dull-witted and small-minded opportunist and

political performer. His tack was to grandstand, privately agreeing to the Kennedy administration's proposed face-saving gestures, then reneging on the agreement to make still more flamboyant and incendiary speeches. He did this repeatedly, eventually provoking the armed campus riot that drew white supremacist hooligans from several states—including retired

**"... To be clear, I'm not predicting the possible outcome I've laid out. My objective is to indicate dangerous, opportunistic tendencies and dynamics at work in this political moment which I think liberals and whatever counts as a left in the United States have been underestimating or, worse, dismissing entirely. ..."**

Maj. Gen. Edwin Walker, a Birchite who ironically had commanded the troops from the 101st Airborne group that Eisenhower sent to Little Rock in 1957 to restore order and enforce the school desegregation plan—and dur-

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ing which federal authorities confiscated a large cache of weapons from cheerleader and later U.S. Sen. Trent Lott's fraternity house.

The Kennedy administration had had enough of Barnett and sent the 82nd Airborne to Oxford to put down the insurrection. (Once, in an argument in a Washington, D.C. bar with Christopher Hitchens during the Afghan War, I asserted that no place in the world had been made better by the presence of the 82nd, not even Fayetteville, NC, its home base. That stopped Hitchens in his tracks momentarily and prompted a chuckle. Then my son reminded me that the one exception to that dictum had been Oxford, MS in 1962.)

**B**arnett, like other segregationist officials, had no strategy beyond aggressive performance of opposition to federal authority; their game plan was theatrical. If left to their own devices, that would no doubt be the limited game of the most ostentatiously vile and imperiously ignorant of the Trumpist operatives in Congress—e.g., serial liar, grifter trainee, and malevolent millennial ignoramus Rep. Madison Cawthorn (R-NC),

**“... They’ve been joined in the Trump years by a cornucopia of more or less organized thugs, militant racists and misogynists, open fascists, reactionary libertarians, delusional conspiracists, damaged true believers, and utterly venal grifters—a category that cuts across all the others—and they’re bankrolled by the American equivalent of German Junkers. ...”**

Reps. Lauren Boebert (R-CO), Jim Jordan (R-OH), and Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA). But they aren’t left to their own devices; they’re minions of

a broader agenda, whether they understand or care what that agenda ultimately is. Like their congressional ally, degenerate sociopath Matt Gaetz, and dope fiend and Christian Evangelical swindler Mike Lindell, they likely can’t think beyond the immediate grift. Nevertheless, at this moment, they’re the equivalent of the street-fighting thugs of the Nazis’ *Sturmabteilung*. The game is being scripted,

and improvised, at a much higher level by more adroit operatives. De facto *Gauleiters*, such as Sens. Ron Johnson (R-WI), McConnell, and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) know what they’re doing and have taken advantage of and stoked Trumpist hysteria to pursue a single-mindedly obstructionist agenda that is simultaneously repressive and militantly anti-government. And, as their actions have demonstrated, this broad tendency now moves in lockstep from Congress down through state governments. It has festered in and around the halls of power since Reagan’s first term.

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**T**he ultra-reactionary Federalist Society was founded in 1982 by Yale, Harvard, and University of Chicago

law students and now has stocked the federal judiciary up to the Supreme Court, including a hefty complement of Catholic fascists.[6] Justice Neil Gorsuch, a Federalist Society member, is the son of Anne Gorsuch Burford, Reagan's administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, where her mission—like that of current Justice Clarence Thomas as Reagan's director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—was to gut the agency. Political economist Gordon Lafer documents in **The One Percent Solution: How Corporations Are Remaking America One State at a Time** (ILR Press, 2017) how right-wing corporate lobbying groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), Americans for Prosperity, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Federation of Independent Business—all funded by the Koch brothers and other rich reactionaries—have organized at the state level to produce and pass anti-worker, anti-democratic legislation and to secure and fortify Republican control of state governments. In a recent **New Yorker** article that should be required reading for anyone who diminishes the threat or clings to the view that neoliberal Democrats are somehow the greater danger for progressive interests, Jane Mayer examines

the vast dark money network underwriting the accelerated assault on democratic institutions we face at this moment.

**I**'m not suggesting that some deep cabal has orchestrated an elaborate, decades long conspiracy to seize power.

That's not how politics, certainly not insurgent politics, in a mass society works. I'm also not interested in hashing out counterfactuals like whether this could have happened without James Buchanan, the Cato Institute, or the Koch brothers. What we do know that's pertinent to what we're up against at this moment is that after Goldwater's presidential run was crushed by Lyndon Johnson in 1964, enough of the militant ultra-reactionary core of his campaign took the lesson that they'd been talking too much only to themselves and went out into localities among largely suburban potential constituencies to agitate and field-test messages and issue bundles that could enable building an alliance that extends far beyond the ranks of those who would benefit from realizing the capitalist class agendas that lie at the movement's core. Political scientist Daniel Parker's doctoral dissertation on the Conservative Political Action Conference is a distinctly informative account of how the ultra-right approaches building, sustaining, and directing the movement.

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To be sure, elements of the reactionary right have held onto and are oriented by visions of the society as they'd like it to be organized, and those visions are neither democratic nor egalitarian. As their mundane political practice has evolved and their institutional power has grown, the movement's engineers have also improvised, balancing the practical objective of expanding and deepening a base and disciplined attentiveness to building power toward overturning all egalitarian reforms that have been won since the New Deal and imposing an authoritarian government. That means, among other things, taking advantage of or concocting new issues that both inflame their broader base and permit them to set the terms of national or local political debate. Recall how quickly and thoroughly the GOP establishment went from trying to stop Trump to playing Renfield to his Count Dracula?

I have no idea how extensive the consciously putschist tendency has been among the right. The best that one might say for Mitch McConnell, for example, is that his aspiration per-

haps didn't extend much beyond immobilizing government, precluding any progressive legislation or appointments. Nor do I imagine that the likes of Lindsey Graham or Kevin McCarthy had been impelled by radical ideological commitments more

**“ ... Even the right-wing Catholic bishops have gotten into the act, at least when they can stay off Grindr, defying the Pope in pressing to deny Biden the Sacrament, if not excommunicate him. ... ”**

elaborate than advancing the immediate interests of the class they represent and suppressing those who might want to do anything else. That doesn't really matter; the policy steps necessary to prepare for ultimate

authoritarian victory are the same as those favored by less far-sighted reactionaries: rolling back the regulatory apparatus, which includes civil rights enforcement, politicizing and attacking climate science, using taxation and other federal policies to generate massive upward redistribution, stocking the judiciary, gutting the social safety net and demonizing government at all levels, undermining labor rights and unionization, and more, expunging even the very idea of the public.

Watching Rand Paul doing his best Joe McCarthy impression going after Anthony Fauci brought home to me that Trumpism helped to bring the notion of extra-

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Constitutional takeover of government in from the fringes of national politics and out from the dark ideological core of the Republican right. Trump's preemptive refusal, months before the election, to accept a defeat as legitimate opened a portal through which the goal of authoritarian transformation could move closer to explicit political strategy. The dangerous rubes who were foot soldiers of the January 6 insurrection were only acting out in public, albeit as a *kay-fabe* [7] lynch mob that was a hair's breadth away from becoming a real one, a political objective that had already condensed among a popular right-wing base.

**T**he notion that any Democrat officeholder is by definition illegitimate and inauthentic isn't new of course. Birtherism was predicated on that general conviction; Obama's race facilitated spreading the claim about him, but it was already visible within rhetoric positing Republicans as the "real Americans;" it underlay fervor around the 2000 election theft, as well as right-wing jeremiads that electing Democrats threatened the end of civilization, long before Obama even became a glimmer in Wall Street's eye. Restriction of the franchise to property owners and the rich has been a strain in ultra-right politics across the sweep of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. And the "real Americans like us"

qualifier gives it a popular appeal for those outside the upper class who can be suckered into identifying with them. That qualifier also underscores the work that race ideology does to provide the illusion of commonality among those identifying with the right.

**T**he rallying cry that the 2020 presidential election was stolen or rigged, or both, is a fantasy originating from Trump's malignant narcissism. It's also a convenient vehicle for exhortation of putschism. The novel coronavirus pandemic and Trump's militant denialism opened another portal. There's no need to catalogue the many ways the Republican right has actively sought to undermine public health efforts to control, limit, or slow the virus's spread and minimize the harm it causes. We're living with them every day, and because having any basis in fact isn't a limitation on their proliferation, the fantastic claims grow and morph even more quickly than the virus itself. A couple of stratagems in the ongoing anti-public health panic are worth noting because they echo really old-school reactionary ideology, from before when the fiction of appeal to a popular audience encouraged public politesse. Recall that early in the pandemic, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick urged elderly Americans to go out and contract the virus and "sacrifice" themselves to keep the economy

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open, referring to it as their patriotic duty. Nor was he alone in floating that suggestion. (It's a parochial reference, I know, but that call brings to mind the up to 20,000 immigrant Irish workers who were buried where they fell from yellow fever and malaria while digging the New Basin Canal in 1830s New Orleans, along with the untold scores of millions of others around the world who've been sacrificed for the sake of "the economy.") More recently, Newsmax talking head Rob Schmitt contended that vaccination goes against nature, opining "if there is some disease out there—maybe there's just an ebb and flow to life where something's supposed to wipe out a certain amount of people, and that's just kind of the way evolution goes. Vaccines kind of stand in the way of that." Schmitt and Patrick give voice to the element of the ultra-right that frets about propagation of unworthy populations, or losers, or, to capture that snappy old-school sensibility more directly, *Lebensunwertes leben*. Pandemic denial and opposition to public intervention to address dangers to public health come organically to this element, which has been

part of the institutional foundation of ultra-right politics since the late nineteenth century, among them bank-rollers of the eugenics movement from its beginnings.



With a startling quickness that bespeaks the depth and breadth of their organizational capacity the Republican right has mobilized an

**"... It always seems most reasonable to project the future as a straight-line extrapolation from the recent past and present; inertia and path dependence are powerful forces. But that's why political scientists nearly all were caught flat-footed by the collapse of the Soviet Union. ..."**

alliance of committed reactionaries, opportunist political operatives, anti-vaxxers, survivalists and other more or less dangerous anti-government hobbyists,

internet conspiracists, unhinged psychopaths, militant anticommunists, zealous anti-abortionists and other Christian fanatics, would-be libertarians, gun nuts, unambiguous fascists and ethnonationalists, actual (i.e., not simply people who say or do things that affront liberal anti-racists) white supremacists, xenophobes, sexists and anti-LGBTQ militants, desperate people seeking answers and solutions to the material and emotional insecurities that overwhelm their lives, and, of course, the grifters who follow alongside the herd looking to pick off the weak and vulnerable. Even the

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right-wing Catholic bishops have gotten into the act, at least when they can stay off Grindr, defying the Pope in pressing to deny Biden the Sacrament, if not excommunicate him. Notwithstanding their idiosyncratic identities and issues, Trumpism has developed as the umbrella under which they converge, with MAGA as the symbol that condenses all their disparate aspirations. And that didn't just happen either; it's the result of years of propaganda and organizing.

**B**irtherism and Pizzagate built on the *kayfabe* principle to establish the movement's foundation in a truer Truth than the world of facts and contradictions. That's how Trump supporters can declare sincerely that he's "the only one telling the truth," even though practically every other word out of his mouth is a lie. No matter where he was born, Obama's essence was not American; if Democrats and cosmopolitan liberals are hidden pedophiles—and the image of the pedophile as quintessential, unqualifiable, conversation-stopping evil is the product of a bipartisan sex panic in the 1980s[8]—and cannibals (the latter presumably included to inflame those maybe softer on pedophilia) then the problem is not what they stand for, what positions or policies they advance. And that's why belief in the Stolen Election is so impervious to rational argument; Biden stole the election because real Ameri-

cans' votes were not permitted to prevail. Votes cast for him were fraudulent by definition because people who voted for him could not be legitimate Americans. (In Oklahoma, where Biden didn't carry a single county, a Republican legislator recently petitioned, unsuccessfully, for a "forensic and independent audit" of the 2020 vote in Oklahoma City and other counties in the state on the pretext that the Biden vote was in his view nonetheless suspiciously high. This is shades of the high period of disfranchisement in the late nineteenth-century South, when Democrat putschists considered one Republican vote too many.)


**P**erhaps most important and most telling is how COVID conspiracy and resistance to masking and vaccination have been articulated and fed into widespread, round the clock, frenzied agitation asserting the absolute primacy of individual "rights" over any public concern. This is the fruit of the half-century of relentless, right-wing attack—again, abetted by neoliberal Democrats—on the very idea of the public, which was already evident in proliferation of the belief that my "right" to carry an assault rifle into any public space overrides concern for the public safety and now that my "right" to refuse to wear a mask even in establishments that require them or vaccination in the throes of a pandemic supersedes

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regulations intended to safeguard public health. That narrative reinforces castigation of any public intervention as government overreach or even tyranny. The apparent irrationality superficially driving the hysteria stands out and prompts bewilderment and astonishment. Yet, although characterizations of the Republican party as having become a “death cult” and the like can be arresting as metaphor, they miss the vector plotted by this movement’s political trajectory and the gravest dangers it poses. It is useful to recall Margaret Thatcher’s three most infamous dicta: (1) “There is no such thing [as society]! There are individual men and women and there are families, and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first”; (2) “Economics are the method: the object is to change the soul”; and (3) when asked to identify her greatest achievement, she replied “Tony Blair and New Labour. We forced our opponents to change their minds.” The extent to which that sort of solipsistic individualism has spread in American life, irrational or not, reflects the success of the Thatcherite vision.

t the same time, there is a Potemkin quality to the current GOP-stoked anti-government insurgency. Biden’s approval ratings have been consistently higher than Trump’s were at any point in his


presidency. And rates of vaccine acceptance have been increasing even among Republicans. A recent Public Religion Research Institute/Interfaith Youth Core poll found that sixty-four percent of Republican respondents are vaccine accepters, up from forty-five percent in March. Other poll results vary, but in general a majority even of respondents who identify as Republican indicate support for vaccination. Right-wing operatives in Congress, on Fox News, the internet and elsewhere are intent on decreasing that support or at a minimum exaggerating the extent of opposition not only among Republicans but in the country at large. They want to sell an image of wide social breakdown and crisis; some of them at least, as I have argued, well may want to provoke general breakdown and crisis, but the reality is that it may not be necessary to succeed in doing so in order to realize a putschist agenda.

ontinuing to proclaim that the country is on the verge of explosion could help mobilize the Republican vote in 2022 and, particularly with the aid of newly imposed voter suppression techniques, all too easily could give the GOP control of both houses of Congress. From there it would be an easy step to impeaching Biden. Absent some truly extraordinary circumstance, they can’t win enough Senate seats in 2022 to secure a conviction, but they could easily continue


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disruption in Congress and to thwart Democratic initiatives, impose legislative stalemate (“gridlock”), thus running out the clock to 2024, all the while continuing to perpetrate and hype the kabuki theater version of popular insurrection that’s been part of their stock-in-trade since Santelli’s call for a Tea Party insurrection. A contestable result in the 2024 presidential election—and how great would a Democratic margin of victory have to be to preclude the right from contesting the outcome? Roughly a third of Americans apparently still believe that Biden stole the 2020 election; among Republicans the percentages are more than twice as high and appear to be rising—could set in motion intervention by a Republican Congress and Judiciary to nullify the apparent result. Currently, nearly half of Republicans agree that the time will come when “patriotic Americans have to take the law into their own hands.” The American Legislative Exchange Council is already charting its strategy for, among other things, fighting the Biden agenda, enforcing draconian voter restrictions, dismantling public sector unionism, and even re-writing the Constitution to limit government action and further entrench private property rights.

his was the spark of recognition prompted by Rand Paul’s McCarthyite bullying of Dr. Fauci. Querulousness at what seemed at first blush

as persistence in an incomprehensible sideshow in the face of the worsening pandemic gave way to understanding that Paul and the others don’t have to reckon with the long-term consequences of their obstructionist behavior. I will not question whether they believe whatever they need to believe to advance the interests they want to advance. Nonetheless, they are under no pressure to reflect on whether their actions could yield hundreds of thousands more deaths from COVID-19, or the longer-term impacts of their resistance to climate science or opposition to infrastructure spending because the time horizon impelling them is no longer than one to three years.

 know that many liberals, and not a few leftists, will dismiss this account as wildly hyperbolic. Liberals have an abiding faith in the solidity of American democratic institutions; leftists have internally consistent arguments demonstrating why a putsch can’t happen because it wouldn’t be in capital’s interests. It always seems most reasonable to project the future as a straight-line extrapolation from the recent past and present; inertia and path dependence are powerful forces. But that’s why political scientists nearly all were caught flat-footed by the collapse of the Soviet Union. To be clear, I’m not predicting the possible outcome I’ve laid out. My objective is to indicate dangerous,

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opportunistic tendencies and dynamics at work in this political moment which I think liberals and whatever counts as a left in the United States have been underestimating or, worse, dismissing entirely. If forced to bet, based on the perspective on American political history since 1980, or even 1964, that I've laid out here, I'd speculate that the nightmare outline I've sketched is between possible and likely, I imagine and hope closer to the former than the latter.



A key practical reason to stress the danger on the horizon is the possibility that the national and global political-economic order we've known as neoliberalism has evolved to a point at which it is no longer capable of providing enough benefits, opportunity, and security to enough of the population to maintain its popular legitimacy. I am hardly alone in suggesting that we may have come to a significant crossroad. People with much greater faith in and commitment to contemporary capitalism than I have, and who have much more sophisticated knowledge of its intricate inner dynamics, also have expressed that view, though in somewhat different terms and in relation

**“... As I’ve indicated, the most urgent objective is for Democrats to hold or expand their congressional majorities. If that effort fails, the game is likely to be over for a generation or more. ...”**

to different political concerns. And that's in addition to a broader consensus among globalist economic technocrats that the tendency to financial crises is chronic and that the

goal of management of the global financial system must center more on recognizing them quickly and mitigating their effects than on preventing them.

No less decorated a Doctor of the neoliberal Church than Lawrence Summers as early as 2013 invoked, albeit gingerly, the language of “secular stagnation,” long rejected by his brand of economists, as perhaps useful for making sense of chronic underperformance of U.S. GDP.[9] He elaborated further on the stagnationist tendency in the national economy in a 2019 Brookings paper. BlackRock, Inc., the world's largest asset management firm which has a significant voice in the Biden administration, most prominently through Brian Deese, Director of the National Economic Council, also sounded the alarm about stagnation and discussed heterodox responses, including industrial policy, another neoliberal bugbear, in a 2019 report, “Dealing with the Next Downturn.” At the same time, the already astonishing patterns of regressive redistribution of wealth

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and income that largely have defined neoliberalism globally, and in the U.S. particularly, have accelerated since the Great Recession, and even more during the coronavirus pandemic. How could such an order not slide into the throes of legitimization crisis?

**I**f neoliberalism has reached such an impasse, I've argued, there are only two possible directions forward politically: one is toward social democracy and pursuit of solidaristic, downwardly redistributive policy agendas within a framework of government in the public good; the other is toward authoritarianism that preserves the core neoliberal principle of accumulation by dispossession by suppressing potential opposition. The latter direction, commonly anchored rhetorically by what Colin Crouch has described as "politicized pessimistic nostalgia,"[10] has proliferated since before the Great Recession. Parties or movements organized around that sort of reactionary politics have come to power, electorally or otherwise, in Hungary, Poland, India, Turkey, Ukraine, Brazil, and I'd add Boris Johnson's Tory government in the UK and Trump's here. Elsewhere—e.g., France, Austria, Germany and throughout the EU—they're significant enough to require being taken into account in electoral political calculations. It's short-sighted not to note that similar forces are on the rise

in this country and that Trumpism has emerged as a vessel for cultivating and deploying that politicized pessimistic nostalgia as an alternative to more social-democratic response.

**T**he reality that the processes of neoliberalization at their core rest uneasily with popular democracy makes reckoning with this right-wing tendency's growth all the more urgent. Insulation of policy processes as much as possible from popular oversight—at local, national, and international levels—is at the heart of neoliberal accumulation.[11] To that extent, it's naïve to presume a capitalist class preference for democratic over authoritarian government, particularly if the democratic form comes with an opening for efforts to impinge on capital's prerogatives. Even if we take the corporate rush to affirm support for racial justice after George Floyd's murder as expressing genuine endorsements of anti-racist equality of opportunity and opposition to unequal and criminal hyper-policing, and not tainted by opportunism, is it reasonable to expect that, say, Uber, Amazon, McDonald's, or Goldman Sachs would actively fight for a form of government that might regulate their labor market practices and methods of accumulation and force them to pay taxes against one that promised to protect them? As Walter Benn Michaels and I have observed repeatedly, earnest institutional and

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individual commitment to an anti-disparitarian ideal of justice is entirely compatible with support for a society that becomes ever more sharply class-skewed and unequal in the aggregate.



ne argument that the reactionary putschist tendency cannot succeed rests on the fact that the capitalist class in the U.S. faces no serious domestic threat from a mobilized left, which has been a key element in fascist and other authoritarian coups in the past. We can take some reassurance in that fact, although one could also argue that the slow but steady de-democratization of political decision-making that is neoliberalization has been the equivalent of a quiet coup itself. Moreover, it is not implausible that, if the GOP were able to accomplish the objective in a way that's analogous to ripping off the Band-Aid, and present it as a fait accompli, cushioned by a narrative of constitutionalism, that many opinion-leading elements among the ruling class would counsel accommodating to the new regime. The governing elite's primary focus on preemption of a serious crisis around the 2000 election might be suggestive in this regard. No matter the extent to which

**“...There is an ample social science literature finding that whether or not one recognizes that government is the source of benefits one receives has an impact on trust in and regard for government. ...”**

insurgent Trumpism anathematized elites' genuine commitments to values of diversity and (even if only Beckerite) anti-racism, the golpista tendency promised to pose a threat to political stability, particularly in the context of broad dislocation caused by the pandemic and the demonstrations that roiled cities all over the country in response to Floyd's, Breonna Taylor's, Ahmaud Arbery's and others' apparently racial murders at the hands of police or vigilantes. And with or without conscious intent, full-throated ruling

class embrace and advocacy of anti-disparitarianism also was a convenient, and conveniently sanctimonious, counter to social-democratic critiques of inequality.



here does this analysis leave us? What is there for leftists to do? Samir Sonti, in an article in the forthcoming issue of the *Socialist Register*,<sup>[12]</sup> examines Bidenism and its possibilities and limitations in a careful and sober way and from a perspective similar to that which I proposed here. Sonti points out that Bidenism, through the administration's first six months, has turned out to be more attentive to addressing the legitimization problems than most left-

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ists expected. Biden has committed to restoring labor rights and has openly encouraged unionization. That is already an improvement on the record of the three previous Democratic administrations—of Carter, Clinton, and Obama—that promised pro-labor reform and reneged. Biden has also expressed commitment to a public good approach to government, as is indicated, among other places, in his infrastructure plans. His proposals and public statements substantively counter each of Thatcher's notorious dicta, which is also a welcome break from his predecessors. Sonti cautions, however, that what the administration does on the infrastructure front is likely to be considerably less than is needed. Moreover, he argues, the infrastructure spending is unlikely to result in an expanded public sector, as Biden and his Wall Street Keynesian advisors see the warrant of the stagnation diagnosis as engaging government spending to help "escort" private capital to investment opportunities. To that extent even triumphant Bidenism would likely reset the political-economic moment to a contemporary equivalent of U.S. state-market relations in 1950.

**N**evertheless, despite the likelihood that Biden's comfort with pushing in this direction stems partly from the centrist Democrats' sound defeat of the party's left wing in 2020, the Biden administration stands to create

space for serious left organizing, inside and outside of organized labor. But all the possibilities Biden might open hinge on holding and increasing the Democratic congressional majorities in the 2022 mid-term elections. We have to get past 2022 if we are to try to articulate and organize popularly around an agenda, and vision, that speak to addressing the needs, concerns, fears, and anxieties of the working-class.

**T**he only hope for thwarting that tendency is to concentrate our efforts on formulating, organizing around, and agitating for an ensemble of policies that reinvigorate the notion of government in the public good, which has been a casualty of more than four decades of bipartisan neoliberalism. The "pessimistic nostalgia" that Trumpists and other authoritarians propagate and mobilize around is most consequentially the result of decades of bipartisan failure to provide concrete remedies that address the steadily intensifying economic inequality and insecurity that have driven so much of the working class to the wall. We need to provide an alternative vision that proceeds unabashedly from the question: What would be the thrust and content of public policy if the country were governed by and for the working-class majority?

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**B**uilding a broad working-class based movement is the only way we might successfully defeat the reactionary right wing, and we need between now and 2024 to begin trying to build the sort of popular movement that we need. And we must be clear that such a left movement does not yet exist, no matter how many internet announcements of imminent victory show up daily on our various electronic devices. There are many leftists and people who support leftist causes and programs, but a left with real political capacity has been absent for so long in the United States that even most sympathetic people can't conceptualize what one would look like, how we could distinguish it from the "pageantry of protest" or the effluvia of premature proclamation and branding. Several years ago, Mark Dudzic and I suggested salient features of an institutionally significant left.

**B**y left we mean a reasonably coherent set of class-based and anti-capitalist ideas, programmes and policies that are embraced by a cohort of leaders and activists who are in a position to speak on behalf of and mobilize a broad constituency. Such a left would be, or would aspire to be, capable of setting the terms of debate in the ideological sphere and marshalling enough social power to intervene on


behalf of the working class in the political economy. Some measures of that social power include: ability to affect both the enterprise wage and the social wage; power to affect urban planning and development regimes; strength to intervene in the judicial and regulatory apparatus to defend and promote working-class interests; power not only to defend the public sphere from encroachments by private capital but also to expand the domain of non-commoditized public goods; and generally to assert a force capable of influencing, even shaping, public policy in ways that advance the interests and security of the working-class majority.[13]

**C**learly, this is not the sort of formation that can be generated overnight. And that has long been a catch-  
22 for leftists, especially those whose political thinking is shaped by moral outrage or its practical expression, activism. On the one hand, the magnitude of the immediate dangers we face is so great that we don't have time to concentrate only on the sort of slow organizing that building such a movement necessitates, and this moment's urgency is at least as great as any other any of us has faced in our lifetimes. On the other hand, arguably one of the reasons we're in the current predicament is that a left as Dudzic and I describe has been absent for decades. So, even as I contend that surviving the 2022 election


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should loom paramount in our political calculations (as Walter Benn Michaels notes in a comment on this essay, “even those of us who don’t love liberal democracy will love even less what we’ll get from [Josh] Hawley et al.”), we aren’t going to be able to turn the tide against the rising reaction unless we begin to organize in that way and to rebuild broad working-class confidence in a public good approach to government. We may not even be able to navigate 2022 successfully unless we begin to do so. Fortunately for now, as reflected in his steadily high approval ratings, Biden’s rhetoric and actions may assist in that effort. It’s clearer now than ever that only by agitating for a solidaristic political agenda and perspective on politics can we even hope to forestall, much less defeat the assault that has already moved well in from the horizon.

f course, we can’t possibly generate anything on the scale of what Dudzic and I describe by 2024, much less by next year. The larger goal, however, should inform how we go about responding to the immediate imperative of turning back the reactionary assault. As I’ve indicated, the most urgent objective is for Democrats to hold or expand their congressional majorities. If that effort fails, the game is likely to be over for a generation or more. At the same time, I understand resistance to em-

bracing a Democratic neoliberal agenda entirely on its own terms. However, as Sonti has shown, the Biden administration so far has indicated greater openness to advancing policies in the public good than its neoliberal Democratic predecessors. [14] It is also more inclined to respond to pressure from its left flank, if not its left opposition, as demonstrated in Biden’s decision to act boldly in response to liberal and progressive congressional Democrats’ pressure to extend the eviction moratorium. The recent decision to press ahead on the \$3.5 trillion spending package for health care, child and elder care, education, and climate change without a measure to raise the debt limit, which would require battling Republicans intent on cutting social spending, also suggests that a significant tendency in the administration recognizes that the best way to combat Trumpism is by using government to make people’s lives better and more secure.

here are technocratic neoliberal tendencies in the administration as well, which may either oppose the popular overtures or obscure them in a fog of superficially depoliticized patter. To what extent Deese and other voices of Wall Street Keynesianism in Biden’s circle, his cabinet-level advisors, or congressional Democrats share or appreciate the president’s inclinations to ground


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his policy proposals on appeals to working-class needs and the public good remains to be seen.

[15] Trumpism's success may combine with worries about secular stagnation to sustain elites' tolerance for bolder policy initiatives. The Republicans' open commitment to a scorched-earth offensive, including covering for the January 6 insurrection, may have encouraged the Schumer-Pelosi wing of the party to support bolder initiatives as well.

 rumpism's success also has shown that making headway on this front will require undoing decades of bipartisan disparagement of public goods and propagation of both the Thatcherite fiction that there is no realm beyond the individual and Democrats' at best self-deluding fantasies about doing more with less. Many readers will recall from the 2008 presidential campaign the agitated cries among McCain supporters to "Keep your government hands off my Medicare." There is an ample social science literature finding that whether or not one recognizes that government is the source of benefits one receives has an impact on trust in and regard for government. I'll cite only one study I know most intimately. Political scientist Ashley Tallent, in a sophisticated study of Medicaid managed care and federal contraceptive policies, found that recipients of the services who knew they

were provided by the state had more favorable views of government than those who, principally because service provision had been privatized or outsourced, did not know.[16] This research, which dovetails with experience from the Debs-Jones-Douglass Institute's trainings with rank-and-file union workers on economic inequality and the health care crisis, underscores that privatization and outsourcing are not merely objectionable insofar as they turn the public sector into a woodlot for profiteers. They also have been instrumental in implanting Thatcher's first dictum as common sense. Proliferation of that common sense marks the success of her second dictum, and the Democratic Party's trajectory from Bill Clinton to the threshold of the Biden presidency is testament to the boast in her third. We can only even chip away at those critical setbacks on the ideological front if leftists—including left or progressive leaning advocacy and interest groups and most of all the labor movement—lobby and agitate for that public good perspective and approach.

 oncretely, that means taking advantage of the openings—ambivalent and limited as they may be—to press where possible, in our own networks, workplaces, civic engagements, and institutional affiliations, in the public realm for those with ready access to it, for the administra-

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tion's infrastructure plans to reinvigorate the public sector, not simply stimulate private investment opportunities. It means similarly working to anchor climate change policy to job creation and a serious commitment to make whole those workers who are displaced in the economic and social reorganization that addressing climate change requires. It means also agitating and building public support for initiatives like postal banking and eliminating the income cap on social security tax, even though the latter may produce little more than a holding action against Biden's long-demonstrated proclivities regarding "entitlements." (It's important to say out loud at this point that, notwithstanding the space that Bernie Sanders's two campaigns created for popular organizing around it, Medicare for All is dead in the water at this moment. Even staunch congressional advocates recognize that the best we're likely to win under Biden would be some expansion of Medicare, and even that will be an uphill struggle.)

**I** don't intend to lay out a laundry list here. My point is to note some issues that have potential to advance what I've argued are the two objectives we must pursue simultaneously. No doubt there are others that might also facilitate simultaneous pursuit of beating back the putschist threat and engaging in longer-term movement-building, e.g., any number of ele-

ments in plans to combat climate change. A crucial characteristic of the current situation is that the antagonism between the pragmatic and the visionary that liberals have often used as a cudgel against left aspirations and programs—the ubiquitous “now is not the time” or “don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good”<sup>[17]</sup> —is passé. The way forward, both to avert the most dangerous possibilities and to begin working seriously to change the terms of political debate, is to push for and propagate a public good framework for government.

## Notes

1. This essay is in effect a prequel to my July 23 editorial—<https://nonsite.org/why-black-lives-matter-cant-be-co-opted/>. I was already planning to write it and working on it in my head when I received the article that prompted that response. That is, this analysis informed my formulation of the argument in the editorial, which some readers may have found to be harsh at least in tone. I hope this essay explains the editorial's bluntness. In my view, the time is too perilous to conciliate or give the benefit of the doubt regarding those who, to paraphrase Frederick Douglass, purport to favor social justice but oppose pursuit of broad working-class solidarities. There's no time to enter-

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tain the "I know it looks like we're taking the same positions as the ruling class and neoliberal Democrats, but..." babble or the "Well, yes, the publicly recognized voices of race-reductionist politics may be compromised by corporate associations, but the wish-fulfilling ones that no one outside the club knows about are true revolutionaries" twaddle. This is a moment when capitalism's political contradictions have sharpened to a point at which the space for "centrism" is evaporating before our eyes, and "third way" fantasies lose their ability to compel the enthusiasm of any but the most dedicated, and insulated, of the techno-fetishist faithful. To the extent that this could be a moment of approaching impasse that can be broken only by movement in one of two diametrically opposed directions, one of which is toward a nightmarish barbarism, it's imperative for those who identify with the left to be clear about who, and what stances, are on our side and which aren't.

2. Some political scientists have begun to move away from the tit-for-tat presumption implied in the gridlock formulation in favor of a view that sees polarization as "asymmetrical," noting that Republicans have become a "radical insurgency." See Thomas E. Mann, *"Asymmetrical Polarization Undermined? Thoughts on the New Pew Research Center's Report on Political Polarization,"* Brookings, June

13, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2014/06/13/asymmetrical-polarization-undermined-thoughts-on-the-new-pew-research-centers-report-on-political-polarization/>. Also see Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, "Asymmetric Partisan Polarization, Labor Policy, and Cross-State Political Power-Building," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 685, no. 1 (September 2019): 64-79. This shift elicits two not entirely generous reactions: 1) it's about time to come to that formulation, which shows once again that "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" and 2) the real point was never that there was polarization; it was which ideological and programmatic forces were polarizing around what agendas.

3. For those who don't recall, senior Reagan administration officials surreptitiously initiated an operation in which the administration sold arms to Iran, which was a violation of U.S. law, and used the proceeds of those sales, along with cocaine trafficking, to fund, also in explicit violation of U.S. law, the "Contras" war against the duly elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Furthermore, not only open John Birch types had hands in that sort of roguish activity. The civil and dignified, consummate representative of the GOP establishment, former CIA director George H.W. Bush, pardoned everyone who'd been indicted or convicted, none on

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charges appropriate to their scale of their crimes against the rule of law.

4. See Thomas Frank, **The People, No: A Brief History of Anti-Populism** (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020). The Biden administration also has found this false equivalence useful in its ramped-up bellicosity and active interventionism against left-inclined governments, particularly in Latin America. Biden already is using reasonable concerns about spreading authoritarianism to justify efforts to undermine left governments in Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Peru, and, to add insult to injury, consorting with actual authoritarians and coup-plotters like Brazil's Bolsonaro to do so.

5. "The left has no particular place it wants to go, and, to rehash an old quip, if you have no destination, any direction can seem as good as any other. The left careens from this oppressed group or crisis moment to that one, from one magical or morally pristine constituency or source of political agency (youth/students; undocumented immigrants; the Iraqi labor movement; the Zapatistas; the urban 'precariat'; green whatever; the black/Latino/LGBT 'community'; the grassroots, the netroots, and the blogosphere; this season's worthless Democrat; Occupy; a 'Trotskyist' software engineer elected to the Seattle City Council) to another." See Adolph Reed, Jr., *Nothing Left: The Long,*

*Slow Surrender of American Liberals*," **Harper's Magazine**, March 2014, 34–35. The pattern has continued with exaggerated expectations of the Sanders campaigns, #BlackLivesMatter, the "Squad," DSA, Justice Democrats, the Bessemer AL Amazon organizing drive, etc.

6. Again, I don't want to quibble over who or what tendencies deserve the fascist label. I use the term here to refer to a strain of organized, ultra-reactionary, "god, the flag, and property" organicist Catholicism that's prominent among the reactionary upper classes in Latin America, southern and Eastern Europe, and among upper-class Catholics in the U.S. I associate it with the rabid anticommunism of the Church of Pius XII, though it's no doubt older—e.g., Franco, Salazar, etc.—and Cardinal Spellman and the like in this country. It's Pat Buchanan's Catholicism. It's also definitely a concerted, global force for evil. It's perhaps most dramatically symbolized by, but is not reducible to, Opus Dei or the Knights of Malta. For instance, while the tendency Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett is associated with shares principles, world view, and ultimate program with Opus Dei, she's basically too pedestrian intellectually to be full Opus Dei herself; her sectlet is like a kumbaya auxiliary. Another problem with using Opus Dei as an encompassing taxon is that its membership is secret; Samuel

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Alito, Antonin Scalia, and Rick Santorum are believed to be, or to have been, members, but there's no confirming evidence to that effect.

7. *Kayfabe* is a term of art in pro wrestling. It refers to the phenomenon that everyone involved—performers, promoters, and audience—understands that the performance is staged but collude in treating it as real to the extent, at least for the audience, of total suspension of disbelief and immersion in the theatrical performance as though it were unscripted and unfolds spontaneously in real time.

8. See Debbie Nathan and Michael Snedeker, **Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt** (New York: iUniverse, 2001), and Roger N. Lancaster, **Sex Panic and the Punitive State** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Bill Clinton's attorney general, Janet Reno, made her bones as a Miami prosecutor in the 1980s by launching a crusade against real and imagined child abusers. She pioneered the "Miami Method" for prosecution of child abuse cases, which, under the pretext of protecting the innocent children, abrogated defendants' rights to due process. She also prosecuted one of the prominent cases that fueled the ritual satanic day care abuse hysteria that ruined many lives in that decade.

9. On the return of the secular stagnation thesis, see Robert Gordon, "Secular Stagnation: A Supply-Side View"; Lawrence Summers, "Demand Side Secular Stagnation"; and Barry Eichengreen, "Secular Stagnation: The Long View"; all in *American Economic Review* 105, no. 5 (May 2015); also Adam Tooze, **Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World** (New York: Viking, 2018), 449–70.

10. Colin Crouch, **Post-Democracy After the Crises** (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 91–117. Crouch's formulation helpfully captures the culture war/clash of civilizations narratives around which these movements mobilize and throws into relief that, as a type, their appeals to a popular base depend on misdirection and scapegoating.

11. Damien Cahill, **The End of Laissez-Faire? On the Durability of Embedded Neoliberalism** (Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2014), 106–117; Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, **The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire** (London: Verso, 2013); Ian Bruff, "The Rise of Authoritarian Neoliberalism," *Rethinking Marxism* 26, no. 1 (2014): 113–29; Aaron Major, **Architects of Austerity: International Finance and the Politics of Growth** (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), and

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Tooze, **Crashed**. Responses to the Great Recession dramatically illustrated governing elites' confidence in ignoring popular demands for relief. Massive protest demonstrations all over the West didn't present a speed bump in their commitment to top-heavy bailouts. And it's difficult to imagine a clearer illustration of disregard for national sovereignty than the Troika's calculated determination to make Greece into an example not only for other recalcitrant debtors—the equivalent of a loan shark deciding to break a delinquent's arms to send a message to others—but also to any left-leaning government.

12. Samir Sonti, "The Crisis of US Labour, Past and Present," in **Socialist Register** 2022: *New Polarizations and Old Contradictions: The Crisis of Centrism*, ed. Gregory Albo and Colin Leys (New York: **Monthly Review Press**, 2021).

13. Mark Dudzic and Adolph Reed, Jr., "The Crisis of Labour and the Left in the United States," in **Socialist Register** 2015: *Transforming Classes*, ed. Leo Panitch and Greg Albo (London: Merlin Press, 2014), 351–52.

14. Adam Tooze succinctly describes the Obama administration's role in exacerbating capitalism's class contradictions: "In October 2011 a poll conducted for the New York Times and CBS News found that... [t]wo-thirds thought wealth should be distributed

more evenly ... nine out of ten Democrats, two thirds of Independents, and even one third of Republicans agreeing with that sentiment ... and 74 percent thought their country was on the wrong track. Since January 2009 the Obama administration had been straining every muscle to put a lid on popular discontent. Rather than seeking to mobilize the indignation simmering in American society, it had found one technocratic fix after another. Two years later the result was a spectacular delegitimization from both the Left and the Right." **Crashed**, 395. And here—<https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/cash-assistance-should-reach-millions-more-families-to-lessen>—is a reminder of one of Clinton's gifts that keeps on giving.

15. At some point, Wall Street interests will begin more assertively to raise the bugbear of anticipated inflation and concern for what Paul Krugman once described as the "confidence fairies" who live mainly in bondholders' heads. Summers already has nudged in that direction. Much more significant for now, though, is that Fed chair Jerome Powell has proclaimed *ex cathedra* that inflation is unlikely to become a problem in the foreseeable future, thus providing Biden breathing room to pursue big initiatives. (For those who recall the tenure of Ayn Rand groupie Alan Greenspan,

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this seems a remarkable departure.) The extent to which this turn reflects a spreading consensus among economic policy elites around the stagnation diagnosis, concern with buttressing a framework for social peace, or both is not clear. The answer probably will be worked out only after the fact, through the dynamics of class containment and challenge. From the standpoint of the political warrants of the moment for leftists, the question is beside the point. Ideally, our efforts will be able to influence its resolution.

16. Ashley Tallevi, *"Making the Political Personal: Health Insurance, State Visibility, and Civic Perceptions"* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, 2017).

17. Reed, "Nothing Left."

### About

#### Adolph Reed, Jr.

Adolph Reed, Jr. is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Pennsylvania and an organizer with the Debs-Jones-Douglass Institute's Medicare for All-South Carolina initiative. He's currently completing a book, **When Compromises Come Home to Roost: The Decline and Transformation of the U.S. Left** for Verso and, with Kenneth W. Warren, **You Can't Get There from Here: Black Studies, Cultural Poli-**

**tics, and the Evasion of Inequality** with Routledge. His other books include **The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics**; **W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line**; **Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era**; **Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene**; and co-author with Kenneth W. Warren et al., **Renewing Black Intellectual History: The Ideological and Material Foundations of African American Thought**.

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THE INTERVIEW WITH  
VETERAN NEWS PRODUCER  
PAUL JAY  
OCT. 13, 2021



Adolph Reed says, "The right-wing political alliance anchored by the Republican party and Trumpism coheres around a single concrete objective— taking absolute power in the U.S. as soon and as definitively as possible." Reed joins Paul Jay on theAnalysis.news.



full of little books. Little Blue Books, to be exact. She sifted through titles like "What Every Girl Should Know," "Carry Nation," and "Voltaire & the French Enlightenment," each a paperback, staple-bound, 3 1/2 x 5-inch pocket book that once sold for a nickel. She wanted to know more, so I did a little research.

Seems a man named Emanuel Julius, a Jewish socialist raised in Philadelphia, came to Girard, Kansas, in 1915 to work at the largest circulation Socialist newspaper in the world, the Appeal to Reason. Once there, he met Marcet Haldeman, vice-president of the Girard Bank, and niece of the famous Jane Addams, of Hull House in Chicago. Marcet and Emanuel married in 1916, changed their last names to Haldeman-Julius, and by 1919, 100 years ago, began publishing what they first called the People's Pocket Series, then the Appeal's Pocket Series and finally the Little Blue Books. Printed at the rate of 40,000 a day, the eventual 2,300 titles sold over 500 million copies by the 1950s. Easy to buy via mail, easy to carry around, easy to pass along, the series made books affordable and ideas accessible to common people the world over.

"And you only have a shoebox full?" Iola asked.

"They were a bit controversial," I admitted. "What Every Girl Should Know" is

by Margaret Sanger, the women's rights activist and birth control advocate. She was arrested in New York in 1917, and by 1920, Haldeman-Julius published her ideas as Little Blue Book No. 14. My copy was given to me by a Topeka friend, with the story that at Topeka High a student could be expelled if one of these firecrackers full of ideas was found in her locker."

Folks, we looked through my shoebox. The "Voltaire," by Will Durant was one of many he wrote for Haldeman-Julius. They were later collected into what became one of the best-known philosophy textbooks—The Story of Philosophy, by Will and Ariel Durant. "Carry Nation" and other Kansas titles were written by a stable of writers who created what was later called "A University in Print," that claim stamped on the back of each book. These writers included Nelson Antrim Crawford, later the editor of Topeka's Household Magazine, and Vance Randolph, famous for collecting Ozark folklore. Marcet Haldeman-Julius covered the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial in Tennessee, and Clarence Darrow, who went up against William Jennings Bryan in that anti-evolution case, was a frequent Blue Book contributor.

"And to think," said Iola, "all of this was happening in Kansas."

"And these books have held up well," I said. "A little dusty, and the staples a little rusty. But a fine heritage."

Folks, Kansas radicalism might be in the attic of our history, but we can find it, we can study it, we can learn from it. Who knows when we'll need it again. Remember, Haldeman-Julius came to Girard to work on the Appeal to Reason. In our time, any appeal to reason would help. So, Happy 100th Anniversary, Little Blue Books.

—30—

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